

from our viewpoint...

Emotions produce questionable laws

For the past six weeks, we have watched President George Bush flying around the country, stumping for his plan to allow people paying into Social Security to have control of their own money.

This issue is a long way from finished, but recent events may have put a darker cloud over the President's program.

Reacting to emotional appeals, the U.S. Congress attempted to step into the middle of the Terri Schiavo case in Florida. Members spent several hours last Sunday working out a compromise to give Schiavo's parents another chance to go to federal court.

The President even rushed back to Washington to sign the law so the lawyers could be on the court's doorstep Monday morning.

All this effort and the federal courts — all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court — refused to order an injunction to save her life.

Historically, the GOP has shouted that they are for keeping the government out of an individual's private affairs, but suddenly they are thrusting the power of government into a single case that has been in front of the courts for seven years.

Rushing such legislation through the system is how we get bad laws. That is true from the federal level down to the state and city council levels.

Voters in Kansas face a similar emotionally charged issues on the April 5 ballot with the "marriage amendment" that was passed by the Legislature in February after little debate.

The Legislature was pushed into the amendment by the emotional frenzy surrounding homosexual marriages in other states. Kansas already had a law defining marriage as between a man and a woman, but for the "social conservatives" of the far right, this is not enough — they want to chisel it into the constitution.

Unfortunately the amendment may prove to be a problem for many heterosexual couples living in the state today who are not officially married. The definition of the legal contract for marriage in the amendment will certainly create additional work for the state courts as they have to interpret the amendment and be equitable in their treatment of all parties.

Cutting the debate on this issue short, and using a state-wide amendment to muddy school and city elections, is unfair. If the Legislature wanted to be fair about this — leaving the emotions out — they should have put it on the ballot for the next statewide election. There is no way anyone could mount enough of a challenge to overturn the current state law on marriage before then.

We feel for Terri Schiavo, her husband and family, but after 15 years it is time for the country to leave her alone and let her die with the dignity she should have a right to.

Emotional issues that have been rushed through the process should be debated long and hard before they are added to the volume of laws we have today. — *Tom Betz*

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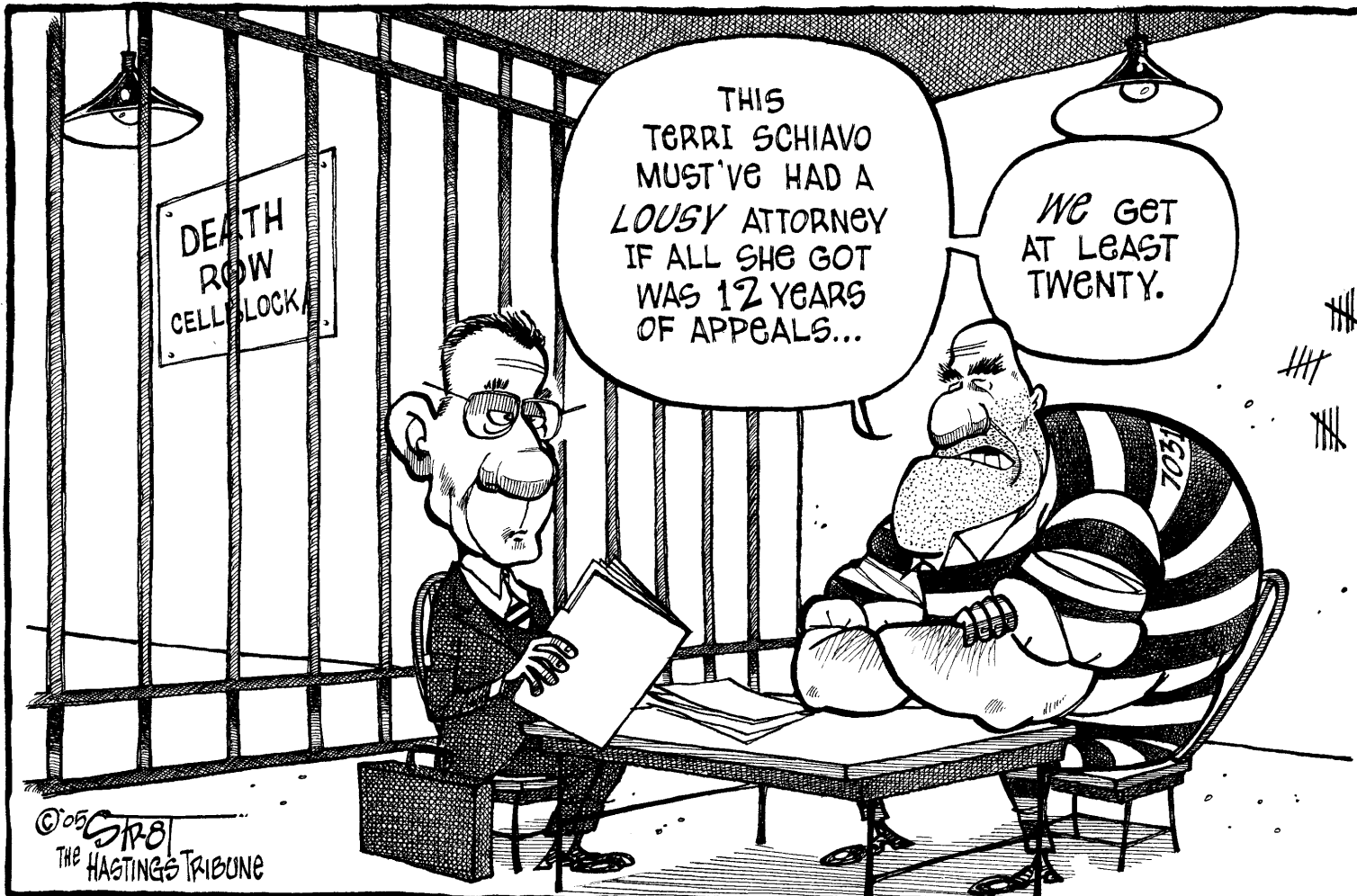
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Mom's walker victim of our outing

What do you say to a person who has just taken an old lady's walker?

"Cynthia, you'd better visit your mom again real soon."

I try to get to Concordia to see mom every couple of weeks. Sometimes, the visit is only for an hour or so. Lately, however, I've been trying to make it longer so I can take her for an outing.

My mother lives in a rest home. A few years ago, she had her own home. Then she sold the house and moved into an apartment. About two years ago, she had a stroke and moved to an assisted living center.

Then she got over medicated and fell one night, breaking her hip. Now she's on the nursing home side of the same home. She still sees all her old friends, but she gets more assistance and physical therapy.

She takes all this moving about with a shrug and a smile, but gets pretty bored at the nursing home, since her mind is still sharp and she's always loved to travel.

She can go short distances with a walker and uses a wheelchair for longer trips.

So it was last month, I arrived in Concordia about 3 p.m. We were set for an outing to the



**cynthia
haynes**

• open season

grocery, topped off with supper at Pizza Hut.

We left her wheelchair in the airlock at the nursing home and put the walker in my trunk.

At the grocery, we wheeled around in a chair they provide and bought some non-necessities, including cookies, dried fruit and cheese.

I drove as close as I could to the front door of Pizza Hut, and we grabbed the first table by the door. My sister came by and joined us, and we polished off a large pepperoni.

When we got back to the nursing home, I found that the front door is locked at 5 p.m. and after that, you have to use the back door.

Mom's wheelchair was locked between the two front doors, which have an alarm. Mom's room is near the front, and there was no way she could walk from the back door to her room.

I left her in the car at the front door and dashed around back. It wasn't hard to find a nurse, who helped me to unlock the front door

Taking a side on 'marriage amendment'

To the editor:

Recently, the Kansas Legislature by overwhelming majorities in both the House and Senate voted to give Kansans the opportunity on April 5 th to define marriage. The Knights of Columbus, Kansas Council, passed a resolution to support the traditional definition of marriage as one man and one woman. The Goodland Knights of Columbus stand in support of this amendment as a group of local Catholic gentlemen.

We believe marriage has been established by God, and no legislature or court has the authority to redefine it. The understanding of marriage as a relationship between a man and woman cuts across time, cultures and religious beliefs. Marriage is the foundation of the family, which in turn is the foundation of society.

Society is enriched by strong marriages. The most obvious and perhaps the most important culture benefit of healthy marriages is the environment they create for raising children. The state appropriately gives public recognition to the status of married couples and also wisely adopts public policies that supports and encourages traditional marriage.

Our strong support for monogamous, heterosexual marriage should in no way, be construed as a condemnation of individuals with a homosexual orientation.

It is hard to believe that this issue is even being brought to the voters. If you are undecided about this issue, I would ask you to imagine how you would explain your vote to your grandparents and what their reaction would be.

Seventeen states have already adopted similar amendments to protect marriage in their constitutions.

Brent Wood, grand knight

Goodland Knights of Columbus



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

Fifty members of the clergy from across Kansas released a letter Thursday opposing to the so-called marriage amendment on the April 5 ballot and called on their fellow ministers to join them in speaking out against the proposal.

To the Editor:

"As our signatures below attest, we are clergy of a broad spectrum of religious traditions with diverse views regarding marriage. However, we are resolutely united in our opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment on the April 5 ballot.

"Contrary to an all-too-common misperception, it is simply not the case that all clergy and religious communities in Kansas support this amendment. In our considered view, this proposal threatens to dignify discrimination and undermine religious liberty. Furthermore, we feel it violates a basic tenant of all our faiths: That all people should be treated equally, with respect and love. This amendment would hurt thousands of Kansans and make their lives harder. For that reason alone if for no other, it should be voted down.

"Thoughtful people of faith can and do disagree on this issue. The many religious traditions of Kansas reflect this diversity of opinion, as do we who sign this letter. We respect the right of each religious group to decide, based on its own religious teachings, whether or not to sanction certain marriages.

"We believe it is not the state government's role to codify one religious interpretation of the Bible, or one religion over another in the Kan-

sas Constitution. To the contrary: the great contribution of our Constitution is to protect the rights of all faiths.

"Some argue that a Constitutional amendment is necessary to ensure that clergy and faith groups will never be forced to recognize same-sex marriages against their will. This is unfounded. Such coercion is expressly forbidden by First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights of the Kansas Constitution. No law and no judge's ruling could ever overrule those two documents.

"This amendment would hurt people, threaten religious liberty and stifle the diverse religious voices in Kansas. For all these reasons, we urge all Kansans, and particularly, all Kansans of faith, to vote NO on April 5."

Members of the clergy who signed the letter include:
The Rev. Tarris Rosell, associate professor of pastoral theology in ethics and ministry praxis, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City.
The Rev. Frank L. Dorsey, Kansas East Conference, United Methodist Church.
The Rev. Lisa Gardner, pastor, St. Paul United Church of Christ, Eudora.
The Rev. Ken Grenz, Spring Hill United Methodist Church.
The Rev. David Hansen, conference minister for the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference, United Church of Christ.
The Rev. Lois Harder, co-pastor, Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita.
The Rev. Anne Rosebrock, College Hill United Methodist Church, Wichita.
Arthur L. Foster, interim pastor, First Congregational Church, Topeka.

A complete list can be found at www.kansansforfairness.org. Click on "Clergy" at the bottom of the home page.

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garfield

